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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001286

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE POLICE TARGETED BY ORGANIZED CRIME,
MORE VIOLENCE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Several high profile shootings of members of the Mozambican police (PRM) and a spree of violent crime suggest that criminal elements have infiltrated Mozambican law enforcement. Armed attacks within Maputo appear more brazen by the day. Mozambique's most notorious criminal, Anibal "Anibalzinho" dos Santos Jr has escaped from prison for the third time, and despite police assurances of a recapture, his whereabouts remain unconfirmed. The Inspector General of Police made recent statements to the press stating that senior PRM leadership were involved in Anibalzinho's escape, and stated that he feared for his life. The domestic threat of organized crime is the most serious threat to rule of law in Mozambique. END SUMMARY.

VIOLENT, ORGANIZED CRIME MORE COMMON, POLICE TARGETED

¶2. (SBU) The city of Maputo and outlying suburbs continue to experience an increase in violent criminal incidents to which the Mozambican Police (PRM) lack the capacity or the strong motivation to respond. At the same time, the PRM has been targeted for assassination and intimidation by organized crime which has deeply infiltrated the police. Police are clearly involved in the many types of corruption including drug smuggling. Recent violent incidents highlight the brazenness of the criminals currently operating in Maputo.

MAPUTO CITY POLICE CHIEF ASSASSINATED, MANY PRM DEATHS

¶3. (SBU) On December 18, in an effort to address rising criminal violence and attacks on the PRM, President Guebuza announced nomination of new Commandant of Police Jorge Khalau, who replaces Custodio Pinto. Since Pinto's nomination in August 2006, two dozen policemen have been assassinated, many in or near their homes. Ten officers were murdered by organized criminals in the last calendar year. The most recent and highest-profile was the assassination of Feliciano Juvane, the Director of Order and Public Security for the city of Maputo, who was shot 10 times at close range by two men with AK-47s. This occurred in front of his home less than 1 kilometer away from the PRM Command Center for the city of Maputo on December 16. No arrests have been made in the case. Photos of the crime scene showed four PRM officials and a cameraman standing in and contaminating the crime scene. Weekly newspaper Savana reported that the assassination may have been carried out by criminal elements that have infiltrated the PRM, or perhaps by career criminals who recently escaped from prison and remain on the loose.

¶4. (SBU) In July, August, and September 2006, a total of six members of the "Mambas" anti-organized crime unit, including its chief Isaias Tchavane, were killed in and around Maputo. In January 2007, two more members of the Mambas were killed in Machava. In August 2007, an additional 5 PRM officers were killed throughout the Maputo area. In December 2008 an off-duty police officer from the DIO brigade (a new name for the Mambas) was killed on the beach in Maputo by persons known to him, according to eye witnesses. Following that incident, on December 14, 2008, there were two attacks on the same police station in one day. Three criminals armed with AK-47 assault rifles attacked a police station in Matola, killing one police officer and seriously wounding another. They also re-stole a stolen car which police had recovered that day.

VIOLENT CRIMINALS BECOMING MORE BRAZEN

¶5. (SBU) Most recently, on the evening of Monday, December 15, 2008, three criminals entered The Waterfront Restaurant, a partially American-owned establishment located near downtown Maputo and frequented by expatriates. Two of the criminals were armed with AK-47 assault rifles while the third was armed with a pistol. The criminals ordered the Swiss manager to open the safe. When he explained that he had no access to the safe, one of the criminals shot him in the leg and lower abdomen causing critical injuries. The criminals then fled the scene without any proceeds. When police initially responded they thoroughly disturbed the scene. More than 14 hours after the incident, the

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investigative division of the police still had not initiated an investigation. The investigative division finally responded when RSO intervened on behalf of the American owner. RSO agreed to transport the police investigators from their office to the restaurant (approximately one mile) in order to generate a report necessary for a proper insurance claim.

HARDENED CRIMINALS ESCAPE, THIRD TIME FOR ANIBALZINHO

¶6. (SBU) On the morning of Sunday, December 07, 2008, Anibal "Anibalzinho" dos Santos, Jr., a notorious criminal responsible for the murder of an investigative journalist among other crimes, escaped for the third time from his cell in the Maputo City Police Command along with two other convicted murderers, using smuggled-in keys and tools. Investigators continue to look into the extent of police complicity in the escape. One of the murderers was serving a sentence for the murder of a warden at a different prison while serving a sentence for yet another violent crime. The two other escaped murderers remain at large. Despite reports of being apprehended, dos Santos has not been seen since the re-capture, and we believe he may be dead or police may have invented the re-capture story to save face.

¶7. (U) Following the purported re-capture, the national spokesperson for the PRM announced that Inspector General of the Ministry of Interior, General Benedito Zinocacossa, would lead an inquiry into the circumstances of the case. Upon hearing this announcement Zinocacossa reached out to the local media and vehemently denied any knowledge of the investigation. Zinocacossa, a 30 year police veteran, accused police leadership of being involved in the escape and of plotting to kill him. Zinocacossa stated that "All of them in the police are dirty" and "Anibalzinho was released by police commanders." The government has offered no reasonable explanation of these conflicting statements, and Zinocacossa has reported that he is simply on vacation in Maputo.

COMMENT: VIOLENT CRIME AND PRM DEATHS, WEAK RULE OF LAW

18. (SBU) Incidents of violent crime continue to increase in and around Maputo, with PRM officers often being targeted, suggesting that rule of law continues to be a serious problem in Mozambique. Well-armed criminal elements and a police force that is widely known to have been infiltrated and co-opted by criminal gangs provide little protection for citizens, to say nothing of the diplomatic community, and raise greater concerns about the role of international organized crime in Mozambique. Perhaps most alarming is the weak response from the GRM and lack of public outcry about recent violence and high-level police assassinations, despite good coverage in the media. The international community is heavily involved in supporting Mozambique's fragile democracy and to a lesser extent its military forces. At the same time, little is being done by the international community to assist the PRM. It is doubtful, that civil society and the rule of law will flourish in Mozambique until major problems with the PRM can be resolved.

Chapman